

# LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2021



PRAY



FAST



GIVE

**FORTY DAYS OF LENT**  
**SAGINAW FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**Saginaw First United Methodist Church**

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*\* with special thanks to Rev. Rob Nystrom, Auburn UMC, for the thoughtful questions/prayers to fill in days when we didn't have a written reflection*

# February 17, 2021

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Ash Wednesday

**Scripture:** John 1:1-18

**Prayer:** Ash Wednesday

O God,

maker of every thing and judge of all that you have made,

from the dust of the earth you have formed us

and from the dust of death you would raise us up.

By the redemptive power of the cross,

create in us clean hearts

and put within us a new spirit,

that we may repent of our sins

and lead lives worthy of your calling;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Laurence Hull Stookey, USA, 20th cent. (Gen. 3:19; Ps. 51:10; 1 Th. 2:12)*

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 353*

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## **Reflection:**

What is your favorite hymn?

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# February 18, 2021

Thursday

**Scripture:** John 1:19-28

**Prayer:** Transfiguration

Holy God,

upon the mountain you revealed our Messiah,

who by his death and resurrection

would fulfill both the law and the prophets.

By his transfiguration enlighten our path

that we may dare to suffer with him in the

Service of humanity

and so share in the everlasting glory of him

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

One God, for ever. Amen.

*Laurence Hull Stookey, USA, 20th cent. (Mt. 17:1-18; Mk. 9:2-8; Lk. 9:28-36)*

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## **Reflection:**

Who in your past has been a faithful disciple and mentor?

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## **February 19, 2021**

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Friday

**Scripture:** John 1:29-42

**Prayer:** Lent

O God our deliverer, you led your people of old through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land.

Guide now the people of your church, that, following our Savior, we may walk through the wilderness of this world, toward the glory of the world to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever.

Amen.

The Lutheran Book of Worship, 1978

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The United Methodist Hymnal # 268

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### **Reflection:**

Who do you need to thank?

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**February 20, 2021**

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Saturday

**Hope through Suffering**  
**By Rob Ashmall**

*Romans 5:3-5* <sup>3</sup>More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, <sup>4</sup>and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup>and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.

March 2020 brought the modern day "plague" to the forefront of US culture. As everything around us started to close, we were asked to wear masks and stay away from each other in isolation. As the season of Lent of 2021 is now upon us, we are still seeing many sickened and many die of COVID. Although healthy, in regards to the virus, many others are suffering from loneliness and sadness caused by the long-term isolation and separation from their loved ones. For others, COVID was just one of many problems they suffered in the last year. For those people, other health, monetary, family and other serious problems prevailed throughout the year. There are not many who would say that they spent the last year rejoicing.

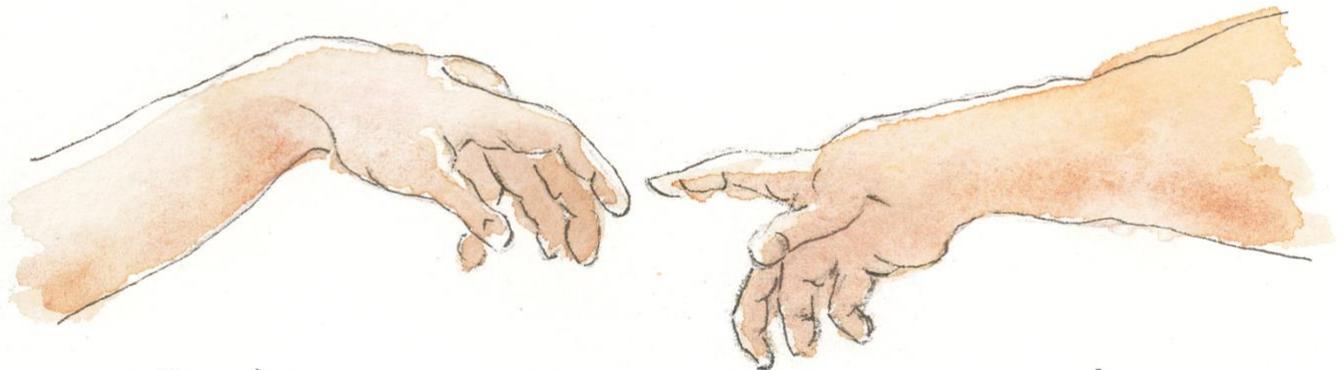
Yet, that is what these verses are telling us we should be trying to do. We should be rejoicing. For, our suffering produces the endurance to get through the suffering. The endurance to get through the suffering produces an incredible character. That incredible character produces hope. Hope does not disappoint. Through that hope, we see God's love being poured into our hearts. Throughout it all, the Holy Spirit is with us and continues to pour God's love into our hearts. Let us learn to concentrate on God's love through all our sufferings and learn to rejoice in it.

Let me be clear though. It says we are to rejoice in our sufferings. These verses do not say to rejoice because of our sufferings. In other words, we are to rejoice for the blessings in our lives and for God's love in our lives, while the suffering is going on. This keeps us Kingdom focused. This keeps us Jesus

focused. This keeps us focused on the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. Let us rejoice during our sufferings because God has already won the eternal war, even as we are still encountering the battles.

*Prayer: Heavenly Father, hear our words this day as we seek to make our lives resemble your heart. Help us to endure in our sufferings, and to learn to rejoice in the midst of them. Help us to learn to focus on You and Your blessings instead of our suffering. Help us to regain our focus on rejoicing when the sufferings of this world get us down. Thank you for Your salvation and blessings in our lives. Amen.*

Psalm 46:1



God is our refuge and strength,  
ever-present to us in times of hardship.

*Artwork by Karen Constan*

## **February 21, 2021**

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1st Sunday of Lent

**Scripture:** Psalm 51

The United Methodist Social Affirmation

We believe in God, creator of the world  
and of all people; and in Jesus Christ  
incarnate among us, who died and rose again;  
and in the Holy Spirit,  
present with us to guide, strengthen, and comfort.

We believe; God, help our unbelief.

We rejoice in every sign of God's kingdom:

in the upholding of human dignity and community;  
in every expression of love, justice, and reconciliation;  
in each act of self-giving on behalf of others;  
in the abundance of God's gifts  
entrusted to us that all may have enough;  
in all responsible use of the earth's resources.

Glory be to God on high; and on earth, peace.

We confess our sin, individual and collective.

by silence or action:

through the violation of human dignity  
based on race, class, age, sex, nation, or faith;  
through the exploitation of people  
because of greed and indifference;  
through the misuse of power in personal,  
communal, national, and international life;

## **February 22, 2021**

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Monday

**Scripture:** John 1:43-51

**Prayer:** from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Thou Eternal God, out of whose absolute power and infinite intelligence the whole universe has come into being, we humbly confess that we have not loved thee with our hearts, souls and minds, and we have not loved our neighbors as Christ loved us. We have all too often lived by our own selfish impulses rather than by the life of sacrificial love as revealed by Christ. We often give in order to receive. We love our friends and hate our enemies. We go the first mile but dare not travel the second. We forgive but dare not forget. And so as we look within ourselves, we are confronted with the appalling fact that the history of our lives is the history of an eternal revolt against you. But thou, O God, have mercy upon us. Forgive us for what we could have been but failed to be. Give us the intelligence to know your will. Give us the courage to do your will. Give us the devotion to love your will. In the name and spirit of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

**Reflection:**

Who from the Old Testament would you most like to meet?

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# **February 23, 2021**

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Tuesday

**Scripture:** John 2:1-11

**Prayer:** For True Singing

Glorious God, source of joy and righteousness,  
enable us as redeemed and forgiven children  
evermore to rejoice in singing your praises.

Grant that what we sing with our lips

we may believe in our hearts,

and what we believe in our hearts

we may practice in our lives;

so that being doers of the Word and not hearers only,

we may receive everlasting life;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Fred D. Gealy, USA, 20th cent.; alt. by Laurence Hull Stookey, 1987 (Ja. 1:22)*

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 69*

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## **Reflection:**

Do you have a favorite praise song?

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# February 24, 2021

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Wednesday

**Scripture:** John 2:12-25

**Prayer:** For Guidance

O God,

just as we look into a mirror to see any

soiled spots on our face,

so let us look to you

in order to understand the things we have done amiss.

We are like a reed shaken in the wind;

we are inexpressibly weak.

Leave us not to ourselves,

but dwell in our hearts and guide our

thoughts and actions. Amen.

*Korea, 20th cent.*

© 1942 Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 366*

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## **Reflection:**

What is a question that you would ask God?

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# February 25, 2021

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Thursday

**Scripture:** John 3:1-21

**Prayer:** Prayer for a New Heart

Thou who art over us,

Thou who art one of us,

Thou who art:

Give me a pure heart, that I may see thee;

a humble heart, that I may hear thee;

a heart of love, that I may serve thee;

a heart of faith, that I may abide in thee.

*Dag Hammarskjöld, Sweden, 20th cent. (Mt. 5:8)*

*From Markings © 1964 Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. and Faber & Faber, Ltd.*

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 392*

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## **Reflection:**

What does it mean that Jesus “loved us while we were yet sinners”?

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# **February 26, 2021**

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Friday

**Scripture:** John 3:22-36

**Prayer:** For True Life

Govern all by thy wisdom, O Lord,  
so that my soul may always be serving thee  
as thou dost will,  
and not as I may choose.  
Do not punish me, I beseech thee,  
by granting that which I wish or ask,  
if it offend thy love, which would always live in me.  
Let me die to myself, that I may serve thee;  
let me live to thee, who in thyself art the true life. Amen.

*Teresa of Avila, Spain, 16th cent.*

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 403*

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**Reflection:**

What is a question that God would ask you?

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**February 27, 2021**

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Saturday

**GOOD**

**By Karen Constan**

*Romans 8:28 “We know that in all things God works for good with those whom he has called according to his purpose.”*

So, how do you define good? Big celebrations, no worries, everything perfect? I may have a different take on that:

Over 2 years ago, I stepped down one step on my home’s staircase, dislocated my ankle, and broke it in 3 places. Instantly, I could not walk. I went from being quite capable to needing almost constant care. In the hospital 8 days, then surgery then a nursing home for 3 weeks. Pain and helplessness were filling my days and my thoughts. Where was the GOOD in this? What did God possibly want me to see here?

I began to see: Pastor Amy, friends, and family reached out with love and gifts and time. The medical teams kept me going and recovering and some of them spent time just talking to me. I found out the CNAs were hoping to become nurses and worried about going back to school—I tutored them in study skills. I revisited my interest in art and created new pieces. I even did my physical therapy and found I wasn’t the klutz I thought I was! And all through it, my husband took loving care of me and kept our lives going.

The good WAS THERE! All I had to do was open my heart to God and take my mind off my problems. Taking the focus off myself showed me the everyday blessings from our God who has indeed called us to HIS purpose.

*Prayer: Loving God, you made all things, and called them good. You have created humankind in your image of love and goodness. Help us to recognize the good around us, to search for good people and good possibilities, and to be good in our care and treatment of others. Touch us, heal us, shape us, and equip us to do your work in the world, through Christ. Amen.*

## **February 28, 2021**

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2nd Sunday of Lent

**Scripture:** John 4:1-42

### The Nicene Creed

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light.  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,  
and became truly human.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

**March 1, 2021**

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Monday

**Scripture:** John 4:43-5:15

**Prayer:** For Holiness of Heart

Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart.

Here is the citadel of all my desiring,

where my hopes are born

and the deep resolutions of my spirit take wings.

In this center, my fears are nourished,

and all my hates are nurtured.

Here my loves are cherished,

and all the deep hungers of my spirit are honored

without quivering and without shock.

In my heart, above all else,

let love and integrity envelop me

until my love is perfected and the last vestige

of my desiring is no longer in conflict with thy Spirit.

*Howard Thurman, USA, 20th cent.*

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 401*

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**Reflection:**

Who is someone that you wish knew that God loved them?

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# March 2, 2021

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Tuesday

**Scripture:** John 5:16-47

**Prayer:** Praising God of many Names

O burning Mountain, O chosen Sun,  
O perfect Moon, O fathomless Well,  
O unattainable Height, O Clearness beyond measure,  
O Wisdom without end, O Mercy without limit,  
O Strength beyond resistance,  
O Crown beyond all majesty:

The humblest thing you created sings your praise. Amen.

*Mechthild of Magdeburg, Germany, 13th cent.*

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 104*

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## **Reflection:**

Who does Jesus say that God is?

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**March 3, 2021**

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Wednesday

**Scripture:** John 6:1-21

**Prayer:** Prayer of John Chrysostom

Almighty God,  
you have given us grace at this time  
with one accord to make our  
common supplication to you;  
and you have promised through your well-beloved Son  
that when two or three are  
gathered together in his name,  
you will be in the midst of them.  
Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions  
as may be best for us;  
granting us in this world knowledge of your truth,  
and in the age to come life everlasting. Amen.

*After The Book of Common Prayer, Greek, 5th cent. (Mt. 18:19-20)*

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 412*

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**Reflection:**

What is one of your favorite Bible verses from the New Testament?

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**March 4, 2021**

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Thursday

**Scripture:** John 6:22-33

**Prayer:** Serving the Poor

Make us worthy, Lord,

to serve those throughout the world who live  
and die in poverty or hunger.

Give then, through our hands, this day their daily bread;

and by our understanding love, give peace and joy. Amen.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Yugoslavia, 20th cent.

The United Methodist Hymnal # 446

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**Reflection:**

Who does Jesus say is your neighbor?

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# March 5, 2021

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Friday

**Scripture:** John 6:34-59

**Prayer:** Finding Rest in God

Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord,

and our hearts are restless until they find rest in thee.

*Augustine of Hippo, North Africa, 4th cent. (Mt. 11:28)*

In comparison with this big world, the human heart is a small thing. Though the world is so large, it is utterly unable to satisfy this tiny heart. The ever-growing soul and its capacity can be satisfied only in the infinite God. As water is restless until it reaches its level, so the soul has not peace until it rests in God.

*Sundar Singh, India, 20th cent.*

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 423*

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**Reflection:**

When have you felt Jesus closest to you?

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**March 6, 2021**

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Saturday

**My 3 "G" Days  
by Kathy Winkowski**

*Isaiah 41:8-10 But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; <sup>9</sup> you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off"; <sup>10</sup> do not fear, for I am with you. Do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.*

Every morning channel 5 makes an announcement that goes like this: "It's time to play what day is it?" They then proceed to tell you what day it is.

I don't know about you, but since the pandemic I don't always remember what day it is or the date of the month.

My weeks have gone like this: Monday is (g) garbage day so I proceed to take my can and recycle bin out to the road, wait for the trash man to empty them then proceed to fetch them.

Thursday is (g) grocery day. A very dear friend shops for me and brings me the things I need so that I don't have to take any risks and go out.

The highlight of my days is to go all the way out to my mailbox.

Then there is (G) God day on Sunday or my God day. This is the best day because it strengthens my connection to God. I am fed again with great spiritual music along with the message delivered by our beloved pastor.

I am not sure where the other 4 days of the week have gone to but due to the circumstances of the pandemic they are a blur to me and I have 3 "G" days.

This lent is the time to start over and turn back home. God has seen us through many hard times in the past and He has never abandoned us. We need to rely on Him and keep our faith strong and God will see us through again.

*Prayer: Holy God, we are so tired of being alone and having to keep separate from one another. Help us to see your blessings in this trying time, and to rely on you, trusting that this, too, shall someday pass and you will be with us as we begin new days. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

**March 7, 2021**

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3rd Sunday of Lent

**Scripture:** John 6:60-71

The Apostles' Creed (Ecumenical version)

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,

born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,

was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

**March 8, 2021**

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Monday

**Scripture:** John 7:1-31

**Prayer:** For God's Gifts

O Holy God,

open unto me, light for my darkness,  
courage for my fear, hope for my despair.

O loving God,

open unto me, wisdom for my confusion,  
forgiveness for my sins, love for my hate.

O God of peace,

open unto me peace for my turmoil,  
joy for my sorrow, strength for my weakness.

O generous God,

open my heart, to receive all your gifts. Amen.

*Howard Thurman, USA, 20th cent.*

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 489*

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**Reflection:**

What promise from the Bible is most precious to you?

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**March 9, 2021**

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Tuesday

**Scripture:** John 7:32-52

**Prayer:** For Courage to Do Justice

O Lord,

open my eyes that I may see the needs of others;

open my ears that I may hear their cries;

open my heart so that they need not be without succor;

let me not be afraid to defend the weak

because of the anger of the strong,

nor afraid to defend the poor because

of the anger of the rich.

Show me where love and hope and faith are needed,

and use me to bring them to those places.

And so open my eyes and my ears

that I may this coming day be able to do

some work of peace for thee. Amen.

Alan Paton, SouthAfrica, 20th cent.

The United Methodist Hymnal # 456

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**Reflection:**

Who does Jesus say He is?

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# March 10, 2021

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Wednesday

**Scripture:** John 8:1-30

**Prayer:** The Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace;  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood, as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

*Francis of Assisi, Italy, 13th cent.*

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 481*

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**Reflection:**

What is one of your favorite Bible verses from the Old Testament?

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# March 11, 2021

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Thursday

**Scripture:** John 8:31-59

**Prayer:** Three Things We Pray

Thanks be to thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits which thou hast given us; for all the pains and insults which thou hast borne for us. O most merciful Redeemer, friend, and brother, may we know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly, for thine own sake. Amen.

Richard of Chichester, England, 13cent.

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## **Reflection:**

Who is Jesus to you?

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**March 12, 2021**

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Friday

**Scripture:** John 9:1-41

**Prayer:** For Overcoming Adversity

Lord, we pray not for tranquility,  
nor that our tribulations may cease;  
we pray for thy spirit and thy love,  
that thou grant us strength and grace to  
overcome adversity; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Girolamo Savonarola, Italy, 15th cent.

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**Reflection:**

What is something that you used to be afraid of, but not anymore?

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**March 13, 2021**

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Saturday

**Working verses Works  
by Ed Cunningham**

*James 2:14-26* <sup>14</sup> What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? <sup>17</sup> So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. <sup>18</sup> But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works.” Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. <sup>19</sup> You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder. <sup>20</sup> Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith apart from works is barren? <sup>21</sup> Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? <sup>22</sup> You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works. <sup>23</sup> Thus the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,” and he was called the friend of God. <sup>24</sup> You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. <sup>25</sup> Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road? <sup>26</sup> For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead.

The call to action in the Christian life can be confusing. Some work in ordained ministry. Some have full time work in missions. Some participate in Church and mission activities on a regular basis as time permits. These professions and activities are works that show faith, but I think we are missing the point of this passage if we leave it there. Faith worth having is intertwined with all parts of life. There is no separate time to plan for, and perform, works to demonstrate our faith. What if we made sure that each time we are involved in a business meeting, an employee performance review, or a difficult project that we acted in a way to demonstrate our faith?

With a little reflection, we might all have opportunity for improvement here. But those are just examples of opportunities at work. What about every other aspect of our lives? Do I demonstrate my faith by how I act in a traffic jam, when shopping in a crowded store, while discussing politics? In this Lenten season, join me in reflecting on how we can change works as a noun into working as a verb. Not keeping track of the things we have done, or plan to make time for, but being open and mindful of all the ways we can demonstrate our faith as we participate in life.

*Prayer: Father in heaven, please open our eyes to the many opportunities that you present us every day to act on our faith. Amen.*



let the word of Christ dwell in you richly  
Colossians 3:16

*Artwork by Karen Constan*

# March 14, 2021

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4th Sunday of Lent

**Scripture:** John 10:1-21

A Statement of Faith of the United Church of Canada

We are not alone, we live in God's world.

We believe in God:

who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the church:

to celebrate God's presence, to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus,  
crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.

We are not alone. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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## **Reflection:**

Who do you feel led to pray for today?

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**March 15, 2021**

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Monday

**Scripture:** John 10:22-42

**Prayer:** Freedom in Christ

Gracious God,

make me sensitive to all the evidences

of your goodness;

and may I, trusting in you,

free myself of the terror of death,

and feel free to live intensely and happily

the life you have given me. Amen.

Rubem Alves, Brazil, 20th cent.

From I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body, trans. © 1986 Fortress Press

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**Reflection:**

What does Jesus say that you are?

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**March 16, 2021**

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Tuesday

**Scripture:** John 11:1-16

**Prayer:** Prayer of Ignatius of Loyola

Teach us, good Lord,  
to serve you as you deserve;  
to give and not count the cost;  
to fight and not heed the wounds;  
to toil and not to seek for rest;  
to labor and not to ask for any reward,  
except that of knowing that we do your will;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Ignatius of Loyola, Spain, 16th cent.*

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 570*

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**Reflection:**

What is a question that you would ask Jesus?

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**March 17, 2021**

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Wednesday

**Scripture:** John 11:17-57

**Prayer:** “Prayer of the Faithful”

May the strength of God pilot us.

May the power of God preserve us.

May the wisdom of God instruct us.

May the hand of God protect us.

May the way of God direct us.

May the shield of God defend us.

May the host of God guard us

against the snares of evil

and the temptations of the world.

May Christ be with us,

Christ before us, Christ in us, Christ over us.

May thy Salvation, O Lord, be always ours

this day and for evermore. Amen.

*St. Patrick (389-460 AD)*

**Reflection:**

What would Jesus ask you to pray about?

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**March 18, 2021**

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Thursday

**Scripture:** John 12:1-19

**Prayer:** For the Spirit of Truth

From the cowardice that dares not face new truth,  
from the laziness that is contented with half-truth,  
from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth,  
Good Lord, deliver me. Amen.

*Prayer from Kenya*

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 597*

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**Reflection:**

If you could be there for one Old Testament event, what would it be?

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**March 19, 2021**

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Friday

**Scripture:** John 12:20-50

**Prayer:** Concerning the Scriptures

Blessed Lord, you have caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.

After The Book of Common Prayer

The United Methodist Hymnal # 602

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**Reflection:**

What is a question that Jesus would ask you?

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**March 20, 2021**

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Saturday

**Being A Blessing**

**By Lou Constan**

*Romans 12:17-18, 21 <sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all... <sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Some of my earliest memories were of being called upon to alleviate suffering. After a showering of blessings over many years, God made it possible for me to do so in my own Family Practice. Even then, though, I decried the sometimes-vast chasm that existed between the ideal Medical Care I wished to see and what was happening in the real world. This was due to a variety of factors including poor education, poverty, racial disparities, and mistakes in communication. I worked hard to address these issues in my own practice but also reached out to educate the wider community by writing articles for the newspaper and doing television and radio interviews. But, for long years, I wanted to write all my ideas down in a single book, something the average person could read and learn how they, in their own lives, could have better medical care. There was never enough time.

Now, because of the pandemic, I have had that time. Doesn't God sometimes ask and help us to create something good out of something bad? I finished, after 20 years, *"Two Minds, Your Body, Knowing What's Going On In Your Doctor's Head And Getting That Knowledge To Work For You."* May this be a blessing too!

*Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for your inspiration and call to service. Thank you for gifting us with dreams, creativity, and skills to bless others. Help each of us use our gifts to be a blessing in your world, in many and varied ways. Amen.*

**March 21, 2021**

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5th Sunday of Lent

**Scripture:** John 13:1-20

A Statement of Faith of the Korean Methodist Church

We believe in the one God,

creator and sustainer of all things, Father of all nations,  
the source of all goodness and beauty, all truth and love.

We believe in Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh,

our teacher, example, and Redeemer,  
the Savior of the world.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,

God present with us for guidance, for comfort,  
and for strength.

We believe in the forgiveness of sins,

in the life of love and prayer,  
and in grace equal to every need.

We believe in the Word of God

contained in the Old and New Testaments  
as the sufficient rule both of faith and of practice.

We believe in the church,

those who are united in the living Lord  
for the purpose of worship and service.

# March 22, 2021

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Monday

**Scripture:** John 13:21-38

**Prayer:** Listen, Lord (A Prayer)

O Lord, we come this morning knee-bowed and body-bent before thy throne of grace. O Lord—this morning—bow our hearts beneath our knees, and our knees in some lonesome valley. We come this morning like empty pitchers to a full fountain, with no merits of our own. O Lord, open up a window of heaven, and lean out far over the battlements of glory, and listen this morning. Amen.

James Weldon Johnson, USA, 20th cent.

© 1927 The Viking Press, Inc., renewed 1955 Grace Nail Johnson

The United Methodist Hymnal # 677

Copyright © 1989 The United Methodist Publishing House

## **Reflection:**

What does it mean to love God with heart, mind, soul and strength?

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# **March 23, 2021**

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Tuesday

**Scripture:** John 14:1-14

**Prayer:** For Help for the Forthcoming Day

Almighty and everlasting God, you have safely brought us to the beginning of this day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger, but that all our doings, ordered by your governance, may be always righteous in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

After The Book of Common Prayer; alt. Laurence Hull Stookey, 1987

The United Methodist Hymnal # 681

Copyright © 1989 The United Methodist Publishing House

**Reflection:**

Who, right now, do you admire for their service?

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# March 24, 2021

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Wednesday

**Scripture:** John 14:15-31

**Prayer:** A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition

I am no longer my own, but thine.

Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,  
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things  
to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth,  
let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

The United Methodist Hymnal # 607

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**Reflection:**

If you could be there for one New Testament event, what would it be?

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**March 25, 2021**

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Thursday

**Scripture:** John 15:1-11

**Prayer:** For Strength

O creator and mighty God,

you have promised strength for the weak,  
rest for the laborers, light for the way,  
grace for the trials, help from above,  
unfailing sympathy, undying love.

O creator and mighty God,

help us to continue in your promise. Amen.”

*Traditional Prayer, Pakistan, ALT*

*The United Methodist Book of Worship # 524*

*Copyright © 1992 The United Methodist Publishing House*

**Reflection:**

What is one way that God has helped you to grow in your faith?

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**March 26, 2021**

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Friday

**Scripture:** John 15:12-27

**Prayer:** Prayer to the Holy Spirit

O Great Spirit,

whose breath gives life to the world,

and whose voice is heard in the soft breeze:

We need your strength and wisdom.

Cause us to walk in beauty. Give us eyes

ever to behold the red and purple sunset.

Make us wise so that we may understand

what you have taught us.

Help us learn the lessons you have hidden

in every leaf and rock.

Make us always ready to come to you

with clean hands and steady eyes,

so when life fades, like the fading sunset,

our spirits may come to you without shame. Amen.

Trad. Native American prayer

The United Methodist Hymnal # 329

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**Reflection:**

In the Bible Jesus says he is: Lord, Savior, Teacher, and Friend, are any of these hard for you to accept or understand?

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**March 27, 2021**

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Saturday

**My Sanctuary – My Place of Refuge and Safety**

**By Sue Arceo**

*Psalm 139:7-12 Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup> If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. <sup>9</sup> If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, <sup>10</sup> even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast. <sup>11</sup> If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night," <sup>12</sup> even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.*

For many years my idea and definition of sanctuary has been a huge, beautiful room in my church. This is where I go to sing, listen and pray, along with many people whom I have grown to know as my church family and look forward to worship with each week.

For nearly a year now my sanctuary has become the (most of the time cluttered with daily life) family room in a place I have called home for more than 20 years along with my husband of 28+ years. The clutter now includes the invasion of a work computer, iPad and papers and files needed for working at home for those duties that don't have to be done in the office as the office has become a place where I can no longer interact with people unless I am wearing a mask, maintain a 6' distance and constantly clean up any office items I may need to touch or have touched.

Come Sunday morning just before 10am (and sometimes on Wednesday evenings), I sit down in my rocking chair in front of the flat screen TV and ready myself to dream I am in my church sanctuary to drink up the music, message and meditative/contemplative moments of refuge from what has often been another stressful week in a year that has been an extremely difficult year to experience. Not difficult in the sense that I have had to stay home a lot more than usual. I do go out to work a minimum of hours in the office and make trips to the grocery store, pharmacy and pet

store all while masked and sometimes gloved and attempting to maintain a 6' distance. Staying home has always been comforting to me as I realize my home is also a sanctuary for me – my place of refuge and safety.

I am thankful I am able to do some work from home. Many people do not have that option. We have a treadmill and some exercise equipment to use to try to stay fit so we don't need to go out to a gym. We have the technology to watch movies and shows. Cooking shows are my favorite and have helped me add to my somewhat limited repertoire of recipes so we don't miss those dinners out on a Friday night so much. Travel shows are next on the list of favorites for that escape to another land where life was once "normal." I can even use my smart phone to google a bible verse or prayer if I am in need. I also do crafts at home which consist of making prayer beads and crocheting small, usually holiday projects or an occasional blanket. Counting and stringing beads and wondering what prayers might be said while holding them, and counting crochet stitches, keeps my mind off of the worry of messy politics, Corona virus and other depressing news stories that seem to be the constant these days.

I am thankful my church has the equipment, technology and the people to make worship happen for me and anyone else to tune in and take a break from the worries of the world. I can listen to Pastor Amy give an inspiring sermon and Bryan and many other talented church members provide music and songs to provide and prepare me with what I need to face another week.

Pastor Amy, Bryan, and the technical crew that makes worship happen, I am eternally grateful and I want you to know I am out there listening. I know my world is a better place with all of you in it.

*Prayer: Loving God, I am so grateful for my pastor, my church family, my church's many musicians, and all the technology that enables us to connect. Thank you for being present wherever we are, and for helping me to create sanctuary at home. Amen.*

**March 28, 2021**

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Palm Sunday

**Scripture:** Psalm 22

**Prayer:** A Modern Affirmation

Where the Spirit of the Lord is,  
there is the one true church, apostolic and universal,  
whose holy faith let us now declare:

*We believe in God the Father,  
infinite in wisdom, power, and love,  
whose mercy is over all his works,  
and whose will is ever directed to his children's good.*

*We believe in Jesus Christ,  
Son of God and Son of man,  
the gift of the Father's unfailing grace,  
the ground of our hope,  
and the promise of our deliverance from sin and death.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit  
as the divine presence in our lives,  
whereby we are kept in perpetual remembrance  
of the truth of Christ,  
and find strength and help in time of need.*

**March 29, 2021**

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Monday

**Scripture:** John 16:1-15

**Prayer:** For Renewal of the Church

Renew your church, Lord,  
your people in this land.  
Save us from cheap words  
and self-deception in your service.  
In the power of your Spirit  
transform us,  
and shape us  
by your cross. Amen.

*South Africa, 20th cent. © 1986 John de Gruchy*

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 574*

*Copyright © 1989 The United Methodist Publishing House*

**Reflection:**

When do you feel you are best serving God?

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**March 30, 2021**

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Tuesday

**Scripture:** John 16:16-33

**Prayer:** For Direction

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings,  
with your most gracious favor,  
and further us with your continual help,  
that in all our works,  
begun, continued, and ended in you,  
we may glorify your holy name,  
and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*After The Book of Common Prayer*

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 705*

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**Reflection:**

Why does Jesus say, “Love your enemy?”

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# March 31, 2021

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Wednesday

**Scripture:** John 17:1-26

**Prayer:** Passion/ Palm Sunday

Almighty God,

you sent your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ,

to suffer death on the cross.

Grant that we may share in his obedience to your will

and in the glorious victory of his resurrection;

through Jesus Christ our Lord,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

One God, now and ever. Amen.

*The Lutheran Book of Worship, 1978; alt by Laurence Hull Stookey, 1987*

© 1978, 1989 Augsburg Publishing House

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 281*

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## **Reflection:**

How has God used you to help someone or in service?

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**April 1, 2021**

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Holy Thursday

**Scripture:** John 18:1-40

**Prayer:** Holy Thursday

Gracious God,  
your Anointed One, on the night before he suffered,  
instituted the sacrament of his body and blood.  
Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully  
in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who in these holy mysteries  
gives us a pledge of eternal life. Amen.

*After The Book of Common Prayer*

*(Mt. 26:26-29; Mk. 14:22-25; Lk. 17-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26)*

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 283*

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**Reflection:**

Why did Jesus offer Judas communion at the Last Supper?

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**April 2, 2021**

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Good Friday

**Scripture:** John 19:1-42

**Prayer:** Good Friday

Almighty God,  
graciously behold this your family,  
for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing  
to be betrayed into the hands of sinners,  
and to suffer death upon the cross;  
who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
One God, for ever and ever. Amen.

*After The Book of Common Prayer*

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 284*

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**Reflection:**

Why did Jesus pray, “Father, forgive them. They know not what they do.”

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**April 3, 2021**

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Saturday

**Looking Over the Edge**

**By Peg Wilken**

*Psalm 30:1-5, 10-12* <sup>1</sup>I will praise you, Lord, you have rescued me and have not let my enemies rejoice over me. <sup>2</sup>O Lord, you have raised my soul from the dead, <sup>3</sup>restored me to life from those who sink into the grave. <sup>4</sup>Sing psalms to the Lord, you who love him, give thanks to his holy name. <sup>5</sup>His anger lasts but a moment; his favor all through life. At night there are tears, but joy comes with the dawn... <sup>10</sup>The Lord listened and had pity. The Lord came to my help. <sup>11</sup>For me you have changed my mourning into dancing, <sup>12</sup>O Lord my God, I will thank you for ever.

Not to sound like a broken record, but 2020 was certainly a challenging year, and many of those challenges will continue into 2021 and beyond. For me, I call it my “year of looking over the edge.” What does that mean? Well, 2020 started for me with the sudden onset of a serious heart condition and two heart surgeries. Because it was sudden, I didn’t have a lot of time to worry in advance (I’m a world-class worrier). But in hindsight, I realized the closeness of death. It wasn’t that I was in imminent danger of death; it was the palpable realization that I’m not going to live forever and something will get me sooner or later. And that makes me “look over the edge” to really examine what I believe about life after death and my Christian belief in resurrection.

Then the pandemic hit and it made that “edge” ever more real, every day, in every mundane thing—like going to the store or visiting friends or going to church. As the year wore on, the fear of getting Covid-19 just increased. I know there are naysayers who think that our risks aren’t greater than the flu but as time goes by it becomes increasingly apparent that it is a real risk, especially for older people with underlying conditions. My wife and I both hit all the hot buttons for risk factors. We are still anxiously awaiting getting our vaccinations, but even that won’t end all of the fear.

Later in 2020, I underwent a total knee replacement which I've needed for years. The recuperation was more challenging than I anticipated and I had quite a bit of pain and difficulty sleeping for nearly 2 months after surgery—all of which messes with one's peace of mind.

So what's the point of all this? Well, I found that through these challenges, I could turn my focus inward and worry about myself and feel sorry for myself. Or I could choose to look outside. And I chose the latter. When I was worried, when I was in pain, when I couldn't sleep, I tried to remember the people for whom I promised to pray, people who I knew were hospitalized with Covid-19 or other problems. I turned my focus on trusting God (not always easy for me because I'm a control freak).

God's grace met me in the most powerful way during a hospital stay after surgery on my heart. My heart had gone into atrial fibrillation and was not correcting itself. I didn't want to have another surgery to correct it. After several hours, I reached a point where I just turned it over to God and breathed God's presence in and out deeply for several minutes, totally focusing on the Spirit flowing through me. And my heart rhythm corrected itself.

My goal in dealing with 2021's challenges is to try to remember that God's Spirit is alive always and working always. When I am worried or feeling discouraged by all the upheaval in life, that has been my source of strength. I'm "looking over the edge" and learning to trust that God is there and will always save me.

*Prayer: God, you meet us at the edge, and in each and every precious moment of our lives. Thank you for making yourself known in times of difficulty. Help me learn to let go and turn my worries to you. Give me a trusting heart focused first on you, and then on the needs and concerns of others, I ask by the Saving Grace of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

**April 4, 2021**

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Easter Sunday

**Scripture:** John 20:1-21:25

**Prayer:** Easter Vigil or Day

Almighty God,  
through Jesus Christ you overcame death  
and opened to us the gate of everlasting life.  
Grant that we,  
who celebrate the day of our Lord's resurrection,  
may, by the renewing of your Spirit  
arise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*The Book of Hymns, 1966*

*The United Methodist Hymnal # 320*

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**Reflection:**

Who do you feel led to pray for today?

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